

SKUNK CABBAGE
symplocarpus foetidus

**APR.
1968**



NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

APRIL 1968

VOLUME III

NO. 4

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ACTIVITIES FOR APRIL

.....Inside Back Cover

Published by the

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER

622 Williams Street

New London, Connecticut 06320

JOHN F. GARDNER – *Executive Director*

ROBERT C. DEWIRE – *Naturalist*

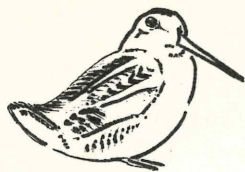
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The Thames Science Center is a non-profit organization seeking a quality environment through education.

The active support of children and adults in the Science Center, its programs, activities and efforts is earnestly solicited.

JOHN F. GARDNER
Editor

The Interpretive Museum of 622 Williams Street, New London, Connecticut 06320
The Peace Sanctuary Nature Preserve At 200 River Road, Mystic, Connecticut 06355



APRIL'S

NATURE CALENDAR

APRIL is the month of the performance of the Woodcock. This bird is a plump member of the sand-piper family. It has a long bill that sticks down in the mud in search of worms. During April these birds perform an elaborate courtship flight before nesting begins.

The bird starts out on the ground giving a loud and sharp buzzing noise called a "peent". Suddenly, he will launch himself into the air, flying high up into the sky and making wide circles. At this time he gives off a twittering sound made by air rushing through his wings. He then returns to the ground making a bubbly whistling call. He usually lands at almost the exact spot he took off from. Now he will begin his "peenting" again and the flight will start all over. This performance will continue for hours, but is usually at its best from about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour after sunset to two hours later and again from about two hours before dawn to $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before. The performances will increase and often go all night when the moon is full.

The best areas to see this are in fields that have a swampy area around them. The flight takes place in the field and the bird spends the day in the marsh.

If some evening you should find any of these birds doing this, it would be appreciated if you would call us and let us know. It is a most interesting sight and will continue through the month of April.

APRIL'S NATURE CALENDAR

April is the month of first spring flowers and many new arrivals from the South....

April 2... Tree Swallows arrive from the South to begin nesting.

April 4... Chipmunks are active in the woods.

April 8... Fiddleheads of ferns begin to break through the ground.

April 11... Trailing Arbutus is in flower.

April 12... A total eclipse of the moon. Begins in our skies at 10:10 P. M. and is total between 11:23 and 12:13 and ends at 1:25 A. M.

April 16... Green Frogs begin croaking in the ponds.

April 18... The Maple Sap run is just about coming to an end.

April 19... Leaves on our trees begin to unfold.

April 20... Barn Swallows and Chipping Sparrows arrive from the South.

April 22... The last frost of Spring.

April 23... Broad-winged Hawks arrive on their nesting territories.

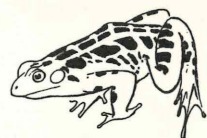
April 25... Marsh Marigold is in flower in swampy areas.

April 26... Our day is 13 hours and 53 minutes long. On March 16th it was 12 hours long....

April 27... Painted Turtles sun themselves on rocks on warm days.

April 28... Daylight Savings Time begins--be sure to set your clocks 1 hour ahead.

April 30... Purple Martins and House Wrens both arrive at their bird boxes to begin nesting.



The Children's Corner

by TRUDY GARDNER

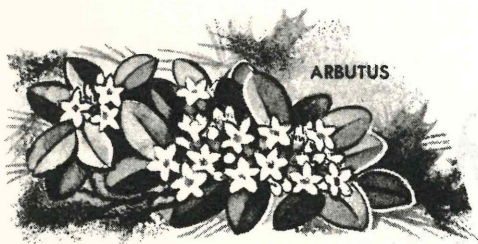
One of the first messengers of spring is the trailing arbutus or Mayflower. Soon after the snow has melted the white or pale pink flowers appear. There is an interesting story that I would like to tell you about this plant and the Pilgrims.

When the Pilgrims landed in Massachusetts they had a very hard first winter. They had just about given up trying to live on the new land and were thinking about returning to England. Suddenly they noticed that the trailing arbutus was in flower. They thought that if this delicate plant could live on this new land, then surely they too could survive.

The Pilgrims called this plant the Mayflower, after their ship.

Because of people picking the arbutus it has become rare. You may find it interesting to note that there is only one species in America and that the arbutus is a cousin to the laurel.

When you go for a walk in your favorite woods look for the arbutus with its evergreen leaves and small flowers; but remember, don't pick it--leave it for others to enjoy.



**PROTECTED
DO NOT PICK**

PET CORNER

by DAVE RICHARDS

CATFISH

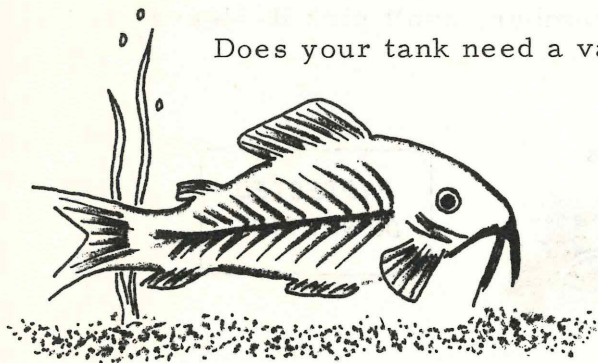
One little fish that you should have in your aquarium is a catfish. Most of these little fellows come from South America and are imported in very large numbers to the United States.

Catfish grow to about three inches in length and have a short chunky body. Whiskers, or barbels as they are called, surround the mouth and are used to locate food in the gravel at the bottom of the tank. This makes them very useful as scavengers because they will eat left-over food that has collected on the gravel.

Catfish do not have scales like most fish. Their bodies are covered with bony plates which overlap each other. These bony plates help protect them from the attack of other fish, as catfish are very peace-loving and are often bullied.

These comical little fish have moveable eyes, unlike most fish, and sometimes look as though they are winking. They will live with most other tropical fish and can even be kept with cooler water fish, such as goldfish. They enjoy alkaline water, but can survive in other water.

Does your tank need a vacuum cleaner?



ROCK HOUNDS

by JERRY THEILER

MINERAL LUSTER

The luster of a mineral simply describes how the mineral reflects light or how it shines. A word used to describe mineral luster should give anyone reading the description a good idea of just what the mineral looks like.

All lusters can be divided into two groups: those that look like metals (metallic) and those that do not (non-metallic). For example, fools' gold or pyrite looks like the metal gold. Some other metallic lusters would be metallic silver and metallic copper. You can see that the color is used with the luster to give a description.

Non-metallic minerals are not as easily described. All materials without a metallic luster belong in this group. In addition to saying that a mineral is non-metallic, you must also use a word that will describe how your mineral shines. Some common words are glassy, pearly, dull, greasy and resinous. Always remember that the words you select to describe a mineral will allow another person to readily know what it looks like.

Let's try a little test!

Can you assign the following objects a color and luster?

1.) a piece of chalk 2.) a tin can 3.) a Coca Cola bottle

Answers: 1.) white, non-metallic, dull 2.) silver or tin metallic 3.) light green, non-metallic, glassy.

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

by *MIKE WALKER and DAVE ALLYN*

For most of this year pupils in a local elementary school have been sharing their classrooms with two Caimen, or South American Alligators, an infant Boa Constrictor and two strange tropical lizards. The children's enthusiasm reflects a growing interest, particularly among young people, in a long misunderstood group of animals--the reptiles and amphibians.

In Connecticut the reptiles are represented by several species of snakes and turtles and a lone lizard, the Five-lined Skink. The native amphibians include numerous kinds of salamanders, frogs and toads.

All reptiles and amphibians are "cold blooded" animals, which means that their body temperatures are close to the temperature of their environment. There are several differences between the two groups that can help an observant person to tell them apart.

The body of a reptile is usually dry, except when the animal is in the water and it is covered by a regular series of scales or plates. Fingers and toes, if they are present, have claws.

Amphibians, on the other hand, have bodies which are more or less moist constantly when the animal is in a healthy condition. On some amphibians, notably the frogs and salamanders, this moisture is readily apparent. On others, such as the toad, it is less noticeable. For most amphibians this moisture is vital because it enables them to "breathe through their skins" to a certain extent. The skin

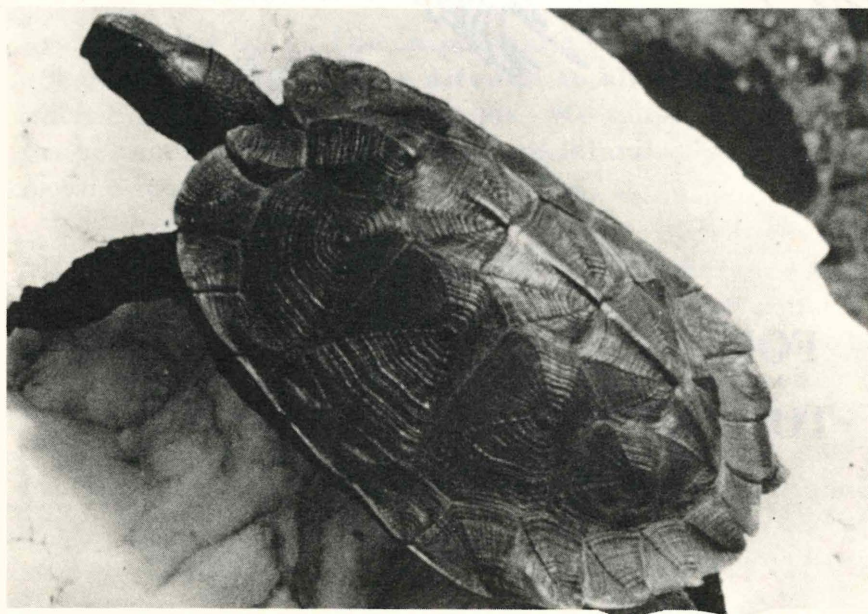
texture varies from smooth among the frogs and salamanders, to granular in the case of the toads, but there are no scales or plates and the fingers and toes are without claws.

There will be an exhibit of several reptiles and amphibians at the Science Center Museum on the weekend of April 27 and 28. The exhibit will be open to the public from 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. on both days.

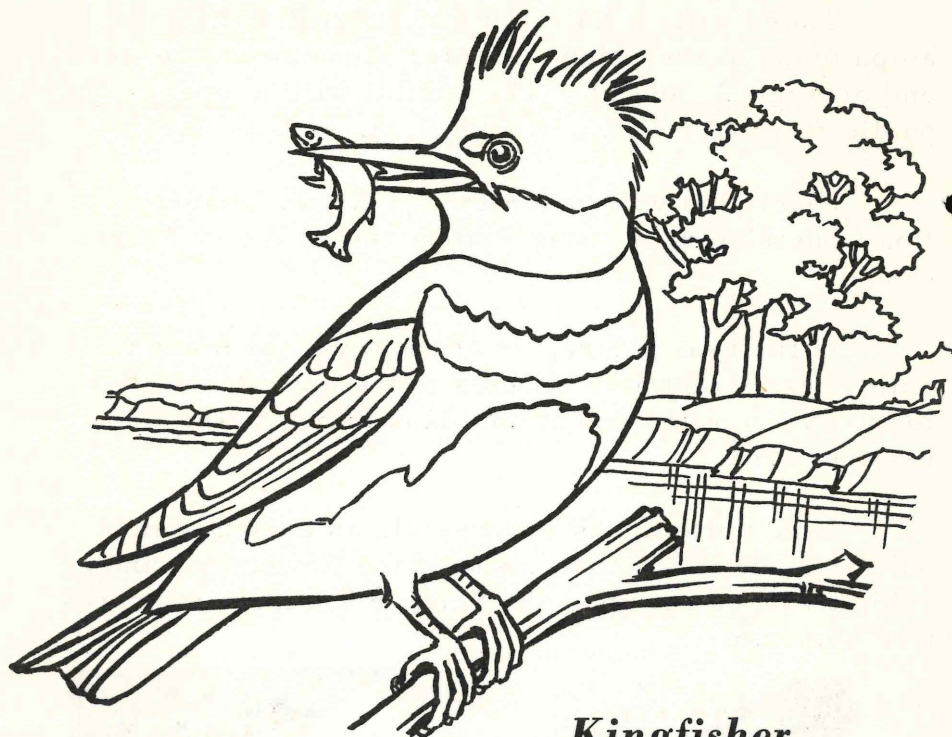
Highlights will be a Mexican Green Iguana, a Boa Constrictor, a young Python and an Asian Tokay Gecko.

In the near future, an attempt will be made to collect representative species of the approximately forty-five reptiles and amphibians native to the Connecticut area.

If this attempt is successful, an announcement will be made in a future issue of the Newsletter and an exhibit will be set up at the Science Center's Interpretive Museum.

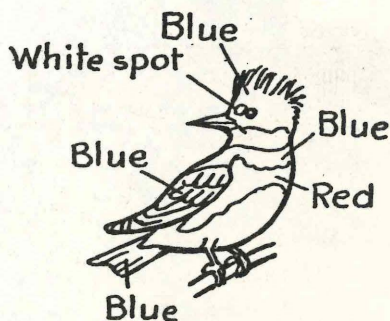


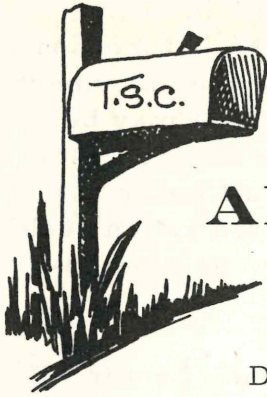
A BIRD THAT MAKES HIS HOME AT THE PEACE SANCTUARY



Kingfisher

FOR YOU
TO COLOR





ARTICLES OF ADULT INTEREST

HALEY FARM.... The Officers and Directors of Connecticut Forest and Parks Association have voted to assist the Groton Open Space Committee in their efforts to have the Haley Farm preserved as a State Park. This group needs your support. For additional information write to the Science Center....

LANTERN HILL.... If things continue as they are, Lantern Hill will begin to be consumed in two to three years and will be gone in ten years. Write to The Lantern Hill Trust President, Attorney R. M. Bowers, Box 147, Old Mystic, Conn. 06372, for more information about our hopes for Lantern Hill....

BARN ISLAND.... The importance of Barn Island cannot be understated. Any attempt to alter its present use must be opposed at every level. We trust that those who propose a State Park at the Barn Island - Palmer Neck Road Section realize their mistake....

AN ALTERNATE PLAN.... The Thames Science Center would like to suggest that the area near Wequetequock Cove that presently is the site of the Airport be considered as a possibility for a Recreation Area. This area is ideally suited to recreation purposes and would provide excellent recreational facilities.... If you feel this is an important step write to us and express your feelings....

ESSEX: On March 20, Mr. Earl L. Canfield of Essex gave 97 acres of beautiful wild land to The Nature Conservancy to be kept as a natural area for the enjoyment of future generations. A diversity of habitat may be found on the property--ridge top, slopes covered with hardwoods, a piece of meadow and a small water course. The importance of public-spirited action such as this, to the preservation of quality in our environment cannot be overestimated!

SUMMER PROGRAM: The Thames Science Center will hold its annual Summer Nature Study Programs again this year. A special bulletin will be mailed to members. However, for planning purposes, here is the tentative schedule. Nature Conservation Classes for children in grades 1 thru 6 will be held from July 8th thru 19th at The Peace Sanctuary Nature Preserve in Mystic. Session Two will be held in the East Lyme-Flanders Area during July 22nd thru Aug. 2nd. Session Three will be held at Connecticut Arboretum during the period Aug. 5th thru 16th. Two Special Classes in Ecology will be held for Junior High School Students. Session One during the week of July 1st and session Two during the week of August 19th. These special ecology programs will be limited to 14 students. Participation in the summer classes will be limited to members of the Center and details on registration and fees will be forthcoming in the special Bulletin.

FIELD TRIPS FOR SPRING....A series of field trips is being scheduled for every Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday evening during the period April 27th thru June 19th. Further information will be mailed to members.

CLEAN WATER....The Citizen Union Research Foundation has published a new bulletin, "Action for Clean Waters," by Leonard B. Dworsky. It is 36

pages of "How To's" in getting action for cleaning up polluted waters.

It is worth reading and here in Southeastern Connecticut worth using. It can be secured from Citizen Union Research Foundation Inc., 5 Beekman St., New York, N. Y. 10038 for 25¢.

LITTER.... Research shows that in 1965 brewers shipped 32,641,000 gross "no deposit--no return" bottles. During the same year Non-returnable soft drink bottles reached 6,250,000 gross. Guess where the bulk of these bottles finally ended up.... Can this go on forever?

A GIFT MEMBERSHIP KEEPS GIVING ALL YEAR . . .

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER

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|---|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Junior (under 16) \$3 |

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Contributions are tax deductible*

DISCOVERING NATURE WITH YOUR CHILD

A Conservation Ethic

by CHARLES E. ROTH, *Educ. Director*
Mass. Audubon Society

CONSERVATION attitudes, like so many others, should be shaped in the home. However, like development of sex and religious attitudes, there is a strong tendency among many parents to let others do the job. After all, the trained personnel of the various agencies are so much better informed and equipped to do the job. This may be true in part, but conservation like sex and religion is ultimately a very personal thing. Attitudes are developed as much by what those in our immediate lives don't do as by what they do do. Thus everyone benefits more when conservation is a family affair.

A conservation ethic should grow with a family and become part of its way of life. Developing such an ethic can begin when children are quite young for conservation is reading Burgess nature stories at bedtime. It's learning not to pull the cat's tail; to learn to respect him as a fellow living thing. Conservation is weekend rambles in the out-of-doors with all members of the family sharing in discoveries about our complex world. Conservation is cleaning up after the picnic and taking the trash home and it's the silent sharing of a glorious sunset at the end of a busy day.

As the family grows older conservation grows into family discussion of current conservation issues around the dinner table. This may evolve into a family visit and even participation at a hearing on an issue that has inspired the family. Conservation can mean a group effort to develop trails or clean up debris on town properties. It is also more mundane things like a home beautification project

or mulching leaves instead of burning them. It's fixing the leaky faucet and not washing cars or watering lawns during periods of drought.

Yes, schools, scouting, Audubon and similar programs can provide some stimulation and perhaps more information than the home but more important, children need to know that their parents are actively interested in the world about them and are concerned about what is happening to it. They need to know and to feel that we care. Children must learn stewardship from their parents for it to be truly effective.

An ethic is something that pervades our lives. It is culturally transmitted through people we love and respect. If this nation is to truly develop a life-sustaining conservation ethic to ensure its survival, it must begin at home — with you and with me.

Why doesn't your family make it a long-term family project to seek its own solutions to two questions:

- (1) What kind of environment do we want for today and the future?
- (2) How can we help create and maintain such an environment?

It's a bit trickier than solving crossword puzzles or double-acrostics, but it's just as much fun — and it could be our salvation.



FIELD NOTES

Feb. 15 - March 15

Saybrook and Lyme: In Saybrook RUDDY DUCKS were present in South Cove throughout the period and COMMON MERGANSERS were found in North Cove. Hawks became quite noticeable during March. An immature BALD EAGLE was seen in the area around Cooper's Point and ROUGH-LEGGED and MARSH HAWKS were seen regularly at Great Island. On March 9th an immature GOSHAWK was seen on Coopers Point--a rare bird for this area.

East Lyme and Niantic: On March 9th, WOOD DUCKS were seen at Bride Brook and GREEN-WINGED TEAL were at Black Point. Both were probably spring migrants.

Waterford and New London: SKUNK CABBAGE was in flower behind the Science Center on March 13th. WOODCHUCKS are now out in the fields at Harkness Park. Three SNOW GEESE in with a flock of CANADA GEESE flew over the Gold Star Bridge on Feb. 28th. On the 18th there were 250 CANVAS-BACKS in the Thames River off Smith's Cove and one drake REDHEAD was with them. A RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH was at Magonk Point and a CATBIRD was on Niles Hill Road both on the 28th. A RED-SHOULDERED HAWK was wheeling and calling over Mary Butler Drive in Waterford on March 10th. Spring arrivals included RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS in several places on March 9th and a WOODCOCK performing at Magonk Point on the 11th. SNOW BUNTINGS were seen in Montville on March 12th. Up to 61 MOURNING DOVES have been coming to a feeder in Quaker Hill.

Mystic and Stonington: A female EVENING GROSBEAK and an ALBINO COWBIRD were seen in

Noank on March 9th. A YELLOW-BELLIED SAP-SUCKER has been seen regularly off Grove Ave. in Mystic. RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS were seen in the Stonington area on March 9th and the first BRANT arrived on the same day at Stonington Harbor.

Rhode Island Shoreline: Three COMMON SNIPE were seen on a mud flat at Weekapaug on Feb. 16th. At Galilee, R.I., a very early OSPREY was seen on Feb. 17th and a GLAUCOUS GULL was present on the 18th. Two BRANT were seen off the Point Judith Lighthouse also on the 18th.

Contributors to this column were: Mrs. Robert P. Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bates, Grace Bissell, Lawrence Brooks, Philip Dewire, Robert Dewire, Helen Gilman, Capt. John Kinsey, Miss Rose Levitt, Walter Moran and Paul Spitzer.

RESULTS OF CARDINAL-TITMOUSE CENSUS

Town	Cardinal		Titmouse
	male	female	
Essex	5	5	14
Groton	12	11	21
Lebanon	1	2	
Ledyard	9	4	16
New London	9	3	9
East Lyme	11	1	2
Norwich	1	1	2
Old Saybrook	3	3	2
Salem	3	2	1
Stonington	47	42	62
North Stonington	8	9	14
Waterford	17	16	14
Westbrook	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>
TOTAL	130	101	161

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YOUR OWN FAMILY NATURE JAUNT *by BOB DEWIRE*

BARN ISLAND

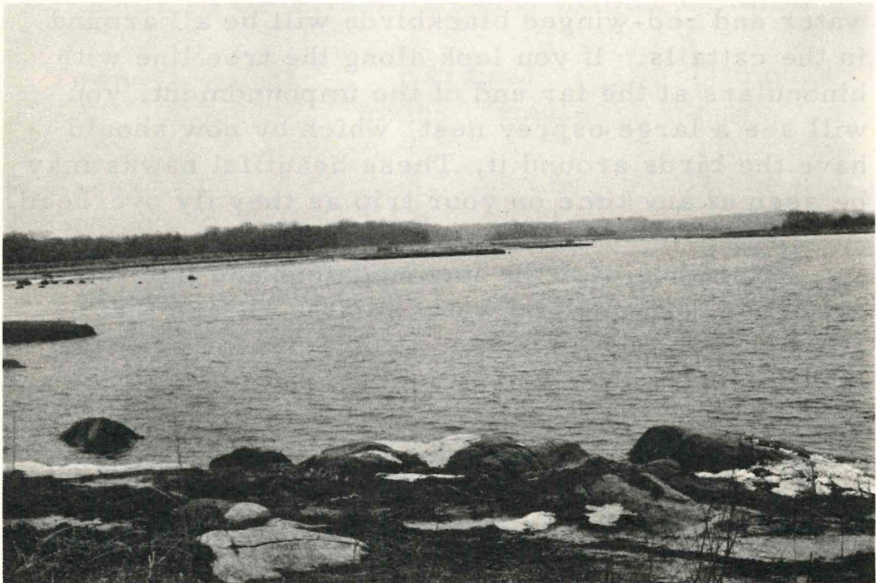
After being frozen quite solid all winter, Barn Island should be thawed out somewhat in April and many migrant waterbirds and some landbirds will be found at this time. The extensive cattail and grass marshes are the largest we have in this area and combined with the ponds and surrounding woodlands and fields Barn Island contains the greatest variety of wildlife that can be found anywhere in the state.

Start the trip by walking down the dirt road on the left hand side of the road that you drive in on. There is a chain across the dirt road to keep cars out. It will take you down to the first impoundment. Mute swans and black ducks should be in the open water and red-winged blackbirds will be all around in the cattails. If you look along the tree line with binoculars at the far end of the impoundment, you will see a large osprey nest, which by now should have the birds around it. These beautiful hawks may be seen at any time on your trip as they fly overhead.

Continue past the impoundment and into the area of shrubs. Listen and watch for the phoebe that usually nests at the old house. In the brushy area you may find brown thrashers, ruby-crowned kinglets and several kinds of sparrows. Take your first right and you will come out at the second impoundment. This is a good area to approach very cautiously so as not to scare anything that is in there. Among the birds present you should find great blue herons, Canada geese, mallards, black ducks, green-winged teal, baldpates and the kingfisher. On the ocean side you

may see cormorants, red-breasted mergansers and often a marsh hawk will be flying over the marshes.

Move on to the third impoundment which is a large pond. Usually the greatest number of ducks can be found here and may include besides the waterfowl already mentioned, gadwall, pintail, hooded and common mergansers. Toward the end of the month blue-winged teal will also be present. Pied-billed grebes may also be here. In the marsh there is a chance to find a common egret, some greater yellowlegs and often some brant that come over from Napatree Point. Tree swallows and purple martins may be seen flying around the marsh.



ACTIVITIES FOR APRIL

April 6 -- 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. -- Junior Workshop for members in grades 1, 2 and 3. Topic will be bottle Gardens. Registration required by April 4th (Limit 15). 50¢ fee.

April 13 -- All Day -- Adult Field Trip to "Plum Island" in Massachusetts. Call the Center to sign up for this trip.

April 20 -- 8:30 a.m. -- Family Nature Jaunt to Napatree Point. Meet at Watch Hill Parking lot. Dress for 3 mile round trip walk.

April 20 -- 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. -- Junior Workshop for members in grades 4, 5 and 6. Topic "Terrariums". Registration required by April 18th. (Limit 15). 50¢ fee.

April 23 -- 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. -- Junior Nature Jaunt to Harkness State Park. Limited to members in grades 1, 2 and 3. Meet at the Parking Lot in Harkness.

April 25 -- 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. -- A Junior Nature Jaunt for members in grades 4, 5 and 6. Along the marsh and shoreline at Waterford Town Beach. Meet at parking lot.

April 27 -- 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. -- Family Nature Jaunt along Bolles Road in Connecticut Arboretum. Meet at Entrance to Arboretum.

April 28 -- 2:00 p.m. -- Family Nature Jaunt to Dolbia Farm in East Haddam. Guest Leaders will be Dr. and Mrs. Richard Goodwin. Meet at the Thames Science Center at 1:30 p.m. Travel by car caravan.

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER

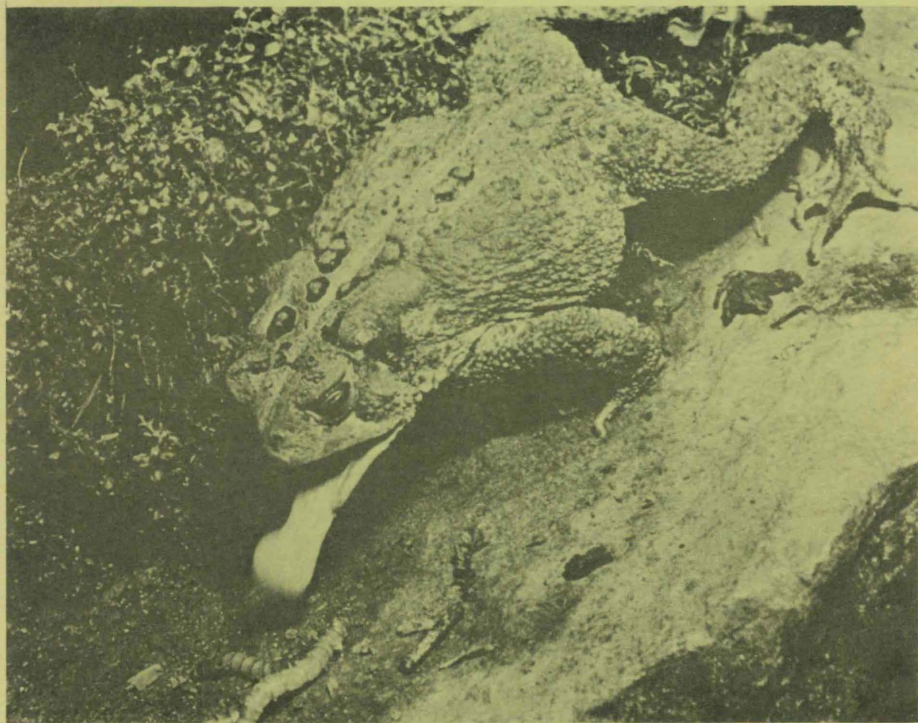
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